



Coimisiún na Scrúduithe Stáit State Examinations Commission

LEAVING CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION, 2003

English – Higher Level – Paper I

Total Marks: 200

Wednesday, 4th June – Morning, 9.30 – 12.20

- This paper is divided into two sections, Section I COMPREHENDING and Section II COMPOSING.
- The paper contains **three** texts on the general theme of JOURNEYS.
- Candidates should familiarise themselves with each of the texts before beginning their answers.

- Both sections of this paper (COMPREHENDING and COMPOSING) must be attempted.
- Each section carries 100 marks.

SECTION I – COMPREHENDING

- Two Questions, A and B, follow each text.
- Candidates must answer a Question A on one text and a Question B on a different text. Candidates must answer only one Question A and only one Question B.
- **N.B.** Candidates may NOT answer a Question A and a Question B on the same text.

SECTION II – COMPOSING

- Candidates must write on **one** of the compositions 1 – 7.



SECTION I
COMPREHENDING (100 marks)
TEXT 1
THE FIRST GREAT JOURNEY

The following is an extract from The Jason Voyage in which the author, Tim Severin, sets out to test whether the legendary journey of Jason's search for the Golden Fleece could have happened in fact. The book was published in 1985.



It was King Pelias who sent them out. He had heard an oracle which warned him of a dreadful tale – death through the machinations of the man whom he should see coming from the town with one foot bare... The prophecy was soon confirmed. Jason, fording the Anaurus in a winter spate, lost one of his sandals, which stuck in the bed of the flooding river, but saved the other from the mud and shortly appeared before the king. And no sooner did the king see him than he thought of the oracle and decided to send him on a perilous adventure overseas. He hoped that things might so fall out, either at sea or in outlandish parts, that Jason would never see his home again.

1. So begins the first voyage saga in western literature: the tale of Jason and the Argonauts in search of the Golden Fleece. It tells of a great galley manned by heroes from ancient Greece, which sets out to reach a land far in the east. There, in the branches of an oak tree on the banks of a great river, hangs a sacred fleece of gold, guarded by an immense serpent. If the heroes can bring home the fleece, Prince Jason, the one-sandalled man, will win back his rightful throne from his half-uncle, the usurper King Pelias. On their voyage, so the story recounts, the heroes meet all manner of adventures: they land on an island populated only by women who are eager to make husbands of the Argonauts; a barbaric tribal chieftain challenges them to a boxing match, the loser of which will be battered to death; the dreadful Clashing Rocks bar their path and only by a whisker do they save their vessel from being smashed to shards. A blind prophet, who is being tormented by winged female demons, gives them guidance; and when the heroes finally reach the far land, the king's daughter, Princess Medea, falls so madly in love with Jason that she betrays her family, helps

Jason steal the fleece, and flees back with him to Greece.

2. Small wonder that such an epic tale has echoed down through the centuries. Homer said that it was already a 'tale on all men's lips' when he came to write the *Odyssey*. And now, twenty-two centuries later, my companions and I also set out to commemorate those heroes of old, but in a different manner. Whereas storytellers and poets had accompanied the Argonauts in verse, we hoped to track them in reality. So we rowed out aboard the replica of a galley of Jason's day, a twenty-oared vessel of 3000-year-old design, in order to seek our own Golden Fleece – the facts behind the story of Jason and the Argonauts. Our travel guide was a copy of the *Argonautica*, a book by the Greek poet Apollonius, wrapped in layers of plastic to guard it from the rain and sea spray aboard an open boat. Pessimists calculated that unless favourable winds helped us on our way, we would have to row more than a million oar strokes per man to reach our goal.

3. Our galley, the new *Argo*, was a delight to the eye. Three years of effort had been devoted to her research, design and construction, and now her elegant lines repaid every minute of that care. Fifty-four feet long, from the tip of her curious snout-like ram to the graceful sweep of her tail, she looked more like a sea animal than a ship. On each side the oars rose and fell like the legs of some great beast creeping forward across the quiet surface of the dark blue Grecian sea. Two painted eyes stared malevolently forward over the distinctive nose of her ram, and at the very tip of that ram a hollow handhold breathed like a nostril, as it burred and snorted with the water washing through the cavity.

4. To me, the tale of Jason and the quest for the Golden Fleece had long held a special fascination. Like most people I first read about Jason in school, but as a historian of

exploration studying the great voyage epics of literature, I began to realise just how important the Jason story is. It holds a unique position in western literature as the earliest epic story of a voyage that has survived. The actual ship that carried the heroes, the immortal *Argo*, is the first vessel in recorded history to bear a name. To a seaman this has powerful appeal: for the first time a boat is something more than an inanimate floating object, an anonymous vehicle. *Argo* is a named, identifiable boat that has a character of her own. In the ancient telling of the story *Argo* could speak with a human voice, and at crucial moments state her own opinions. Even the description of her crew as the ‘Argonauts’ or ‘Sailors of *Argo*’, comes from the boat herself. In a modern world accustomed to hearing of astronauts, cosmonauts, and even aquanauts, it was worth remembering that the Argonauts were the first epic adventurers of the distant past.

N.B. Candidates may NOT answer Question A and Question B on the same text.

Questions A and B carry 50 marks each.

QUESTION A

- (i) “Small wonder that such an epic tale has echoed down through the centuries.”
How, in Paragraph 1 (beginning “So begins the first voyage saga ...”), does the writer establish the truth of this statement? (15)
- (ii) How, in the course of this extract, does the writer establish links between the voyage of Jason’s *Argo* and the voyage of his own boat, the new *Argo*? (15)
- (iii) Would your reading of the above extract from Tim Severin’s book encourage you to read that book in full?
Give reasons for your answer supporting them by reference to the extract. (20)

QUESTION B

A Journey Through Time

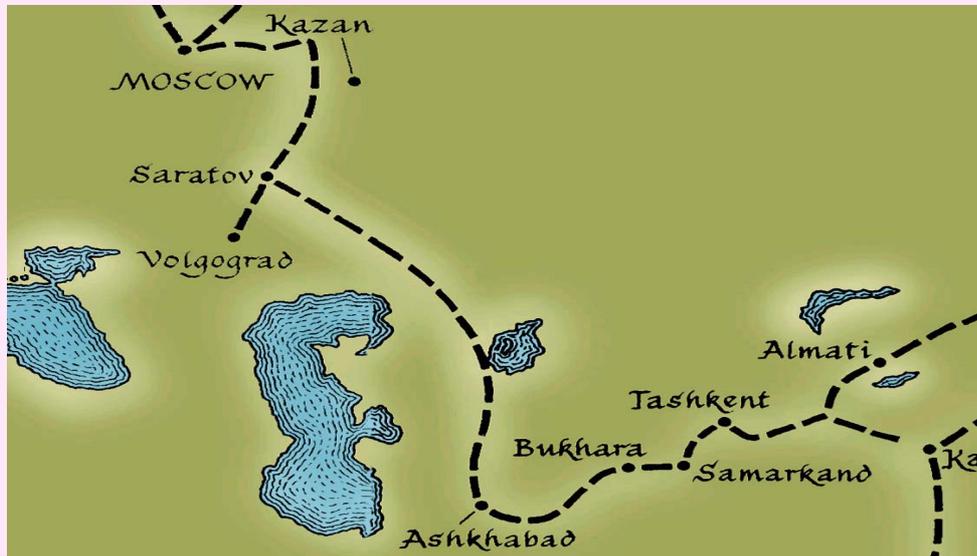
Imagine that you have discovered a time capsule containing a number of items from the distant **or** more recent past. Write a letter to a local or national newspaper announcing your find and describing the items contained in the capsule. (50)



TEXT 2

A STRANGE COMPANION

This extract is adapted from The Golden Horde, Travels from the Himalaya to Karpathos, published in 1997, in which sixty-five year old Sheila Paine describes her travels through some of the turbulent territories of the former Soviet Union. The extract begins at the point when Sheila returns to Saratov station to try once again to buy a ticket for a train journey.



The scene at Saratov station was exactly as I had left it, as if none of the crowds had ever managed to get tickets or to go home or to depart on trains. I joined the battle to buy a ticket once more until, totally exasperated, I was driven to shout out loud, ‘God, where do they find these people?’ Behind me a voice repeated, ‘Yes, God, where are they finding these people?’ I turned to see a slim, fine-featured girl with a long blonde ponytail, wearing heavy mountaineering boots, jeans and anorak, and carrying a massive orange rucksack. She held out her hand. ‘I’m Alexandra’, she said.

I had a travelling companion.

Alexandra had taken a year off studying to travel. She had huge funds of energy but very little money. ‘I need no money’, she said. ‘I am of those travellers who live with the inhabitants.’

At the end of three further hours of queuing and pleading, the woman behind the grille was still saying *niet* – no. During my attempts to buy a ticket I tried to look rather lost and forlorn and held up my money deferentially, bleating ‘Ashkhabad please’. Alexandra’s approach was spectacularly different. She pummelled her rucksack, kicked the wall with her hefty boots, flung her passport to the ground, screamed ‘I kill these people’, clenched her fists and punched the grille. However, neither of our

techniques worked until Alexandra said, ‘You have twenty dollars?’ ‘Yes’, I replied handing her a particularly crisp clean note. Some time later she returned grinning broadly and waving two tickets. ‘We just didn’t understand the system’, I said.

In all travelling it’s usually best to go along with whatever the wind blows you and, as Alexandra had by total chance become part of my journey, I decided to stick with her and just see how things went. I had never met anybody quite so extraordinary and, although she might spell trouble later, she had succeeded in getting us on the train from Moscow to Ashkhabad. As we went to board the train I noticed that right at the end of the platform there was a scene of mayhem. A rusty coach with missing windows and our number on it had been tagged on to the train and was already full. Old women were being pushed through the windows head first, their boots and woolly stockings dangling above the platform. Alexandra went to work with her boots on the dense mass of people at the carriage door and we finally found our places in an open compartment with four bunks. Men lay draped on the luggage racks like leopards lounging on tree branches, some sat on the floor and others were piled on our bed. Now Alexandra used her rucksack to push them along and by the

time the train pulled out the passengers had, by some hefty manipulation on her part, been reduced to those with places – the two of us, an old lady nursing toothache in a sparkly scarf, two polite young Turkmen – and an assortment of shifty men with no tickets and dozens of boxes of smuggled cigarettes.

We were to be on the train for three days and three nights.

The train trundled through golden open steppeland. At various stations people sold small silvery salted fish, cucumbers, tomatoes and beer. The old lady with the toothache shared her crushed hard-boiled eggs. Alexandra produced a huge bag of boiled millet, a dry loaf and a big silver knife. The men in the luggage racks leant down and helped themselves to everything. I rubbed vodka on the old lady's tooth and gave her aspirin.

The train chugged on. Men on horseback rode over the steppe herding their horses and sheep. The scene had changed from Russian to Mongol. At night it was bitterly cold as the wind howled through the glassless window. 'You should think to bring your sleeping bag', said Alexandra.

By the second morning tempers were frayed. The old lady had produced more hard-boiled eggs, Alexandra her millet and bread. Then, suddenly all hell broke loose.

'I kill him. My knife. Where is my knife? I kill who steals it.'

Boots and arms lashed out, eyes stared down. Then, plop, in all the thrashing the knife fell from the grasp of a fat-lipped luggage-rack man on to the bed below.

The old lady got off the train in the night at one of the bleak Soviet towns along the banks of the Amu Darya river. A miserable place, she had said, and so far from her daughter in Saratov. The polite young Turkmen had helped her off while the fat-lipped thief on the rack above had grabbed her bed. He was now fast asleep.

'Some poor girl will be married off to him', I said.

At the thought of this Alexandra leapt up, threw his baggage off our beds on to the floor and hid his shoes further along the coach.

N.B. Candidates may NOT answer Question A and Question B on the same text.

Questions A and B carry 50 marks each.

QUESTION A

- (i) What impression do you get of the railway station at Saratov from your reading of the above extract? Support your answer by reference to the text. (15)
- (ii) To what extent would you agree with Sheila's description of Alexandra as 'extraordinary'? Support your view by reference to the text. (15)
- (iii) Would you like to have shared this train journey with Sheila and Alexandra? Give reasons for your answer. (20)

QUESTION B

You have been asked to give a short talk on radio about an interesting journey you have made. Write out the text of the talk you would give. (50)

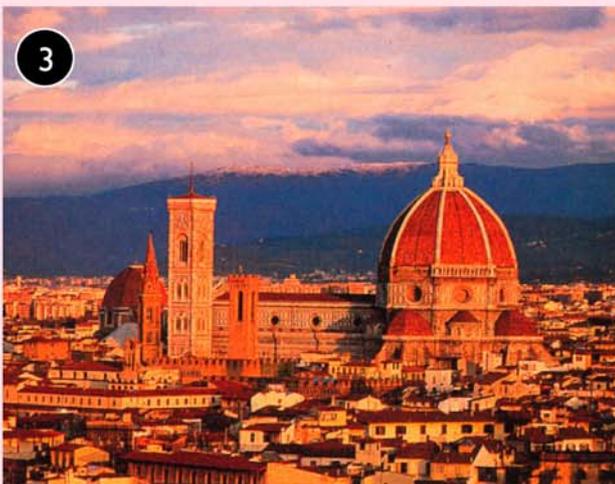
TEXT 3 DESTINATIONS



1
other worlds



2
holidaying in Ireland



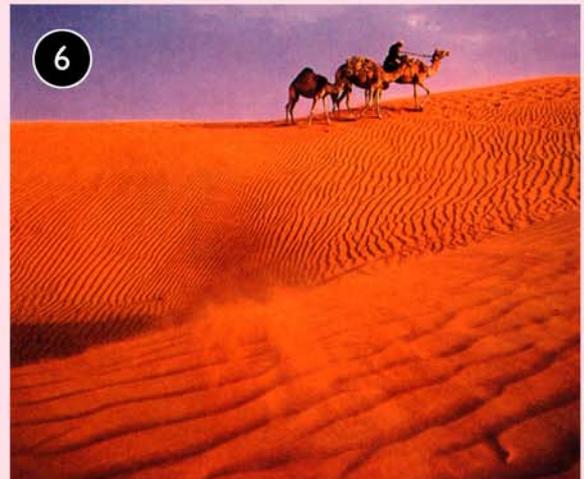
3
European city



4
winter sports



5
camping holiday



6
desert trek

N.B. Candidates may NOT answer Question A and Question B on the same text.

Questions A and B carry 50 marks each.

QUESTION A

- (i) Write **one paragraph** that would serve as an introduction to this collection of images entitled, **Destinations**. (15)
- (ii) Choose **one** of the images and write an account of the kind of journey suggested by it. (15)
- (iii) Briefly describe another destination that would fit in well with the collection printed here and give a reason for your choice. (20)

QUESTION B

The Holiday from Hell

Write three or four diary entries that record the details of a disastrous holiday (real or imaginary) that you experienced. (50)

SECTION II

COMPOSING (100 marks)

Write a composition on **any one** of the following.

Each composition carries 100 marks.

The composition assignments below are intended to reflect language study in the areas of information, argument, persuasion, narration and the aesthetic use of language.

1. Imagine you are a member of Tim Severin's crew on board the new *Argo* in TEXT 1.

Write a letter (or series of letters) to a personal friend or family member in which you describe some of your adventures.

2. "It tells of a great galley manned by heroes from ancient Greece." (TEXT 1)

Write a persuasive article or essay in which you attempt to convince people of the meaning and importance of heroes in life.

3. "...a tale on all men's lips..." (TEXT 1)

Write a newspaper article in which you outline your views in a serious or light-hearted manner on the part played by story telling or gossip in everyday life.

4. "We just didn't understand the system." (TEXT 2)

You have been asked by the school principal to give a talk to your class group on the importance in life of "understanding the system". Write out the talk you would give.

5. "...huge funds of energy but very little money." (TEXT 2)

Using this as your title, write a personal essay.

6. "In all travelling it's usually best to go along with whatever the wind blows you..." (TEXT 2)

Write an article for a magazine for young adult readers in which you give advice to people intending to travel abroad for work or on holiday.

7. **Write a short story suggested by one or more of the images in TEXT 3.**